Frequently Asked Questions Concerning the Duke Compact and Related COVID-19 Policy Documents for Graduate and Professional Students
Updated August 13, 2020

The Nature and Implications of the Duke Compact and Related Student Policy Documents

Q. What does the phrase "personally responsible" in the Duke Compact mean?

That phrase refers only to the commitment of each member of the Duke community to take responsibility for her/his/their behavior in adhering to public health protocols – to take the crucial reasonable steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Q. I will be teaching this semester in-person (whether as an instructor of record or a TA). Even with all of my safety precautions, am I personally responsible if my students transmit coronavirus between each other?

No.

Q. Is the Duke Compact a legally binding document?

The Compact outlines expectations for all of us as members of the Duke community and affirms our commitment to each other, expressed through adherence to the public health guidelines that seek to prevent spread of COVID-19. It is binding to the extent that members of the Duke community (students, faculty and staff) must attest that they will adhere to the Compact as a condition for continued access to Duke facilities.

Q. Why might my decision to study remotely have implications for the nature of my Duke-sponsored health insurance or my student health fee?

If you live in North Carolina and have Duke’s health insurance, there will be no impact on your health coverage or health fee. If you live in the United States outside of North Carolina, you will need to use an in-network Blue Cross and Blue Shield provider in your area. If you choose to use an out-of-network medical provider, you will be subject to the deductible and co-insurance, though you will pay less for the student health fee. To find an in-network medical provider in your area, please visit https://www.bluecrossnc.com/find-a-doctor-or-facility/individual-group/blueoptions. If you live outside the United States and decide to purchase Duke health insurance, coverage will be limited to emergency care. Those outside the US will not have to pay the health fee.

Q. How will the university be using data about me that I generate while I am on campus or in other Duke facilities?
WiFi-location, card-swipe, and parking-access data will be used to facilitate pandemic response, such as contact tracing and building density management. Please note that the provisions in Duke’s Acceptable Use Policy for Data Usage during COVID-19 apply to this data. Duke may use data gathered to develop approaches for understanding where the virus may be spreading and who may be at risk, and as described in published privacy notifications (for apps and other technologies that users may sign up for). Security standards that will be applied to this data are described in the IT Security Office’s Standards for Sensitive Data.

General Health Concerns

Q. What are the requirements for baseline testing at the beginning of the semester?

All graduate and professional students should have received an email concerning COVID-19 testing prior to the start of the term. Testing will occur between Aug. 17 and Sept. 1. You will receive more details about appointment windows from your school. A small set of graduate, School of Nursing (SON) and School of Medicine (SOM) students who have been on campus continuously this summer will not have baseline tests, but will be included in subsequent pooled surveillance testing. All graduate and professional students coming to campus will need to participate in ongoing surveillance testing.

Q. Will a COVID-19 test conducted somewhere other than Duke suffice?

No.

Q. I have a concern about the vaccine requirement for students. Is the University asking me to commit to receiving a COVID-19 vaccine, even though we don’t know which vaccine candidates will be selected, and are not in a position to assess the safety and efficacy of any potential vaccines?

No. The current vaccine requirement described in the Duke Compact and accompanying policy document pertains to the influenza (flu) vaccine. Since there is no COVID-19 vaccine at this time, there is no requirement to receive it. There will be extensive discussion with faculty, students and staff if public health experts recommend a COVID-19 vaccine. Signing the Compact does not commit you to receiving a COVID-19 vaccine.

Q. Are the typical medical and religious exemptions available for the influenza (flu) vaccine?

Yes, and individuals will have to provide documentation to receive an exemption. Contact Student Health to request an exemption.

Q. Are results from COVID-19 tests going to be reported to the Duke community?

Duke will not report individual test results to the community, but will provide regular updates with aggregated data based on tests that are administered by the university.
Q. Is health data about me protected by law?

There are a number of laws that protect health data, and Duke has many processes in place to ensure compliance with such laws.

Q. I am teaching online this fall (whether as an instructor of record or as a TA) and do not plan to come to campus. Do I still need to report symptoms or possible exposure to COVID-19?

Even if you are not coming to campus, we encourage you to report actual symptoms and evidence of possible exposure in order to facilitate appropriate responses to support your health and mitigate the spread of the virus.

Parameters for Teaching In-Person This Year

Q. Is my class considered a large gathering?

No. The term “gatherings” in the Compact and related COVID-19 Policy documents refers to assemblies of individuals for extra-curricular and social purposes.

Q. Are faculty who are teaching in-person receiving COVID-19 tests?

Faculty who are teaching in-person have the opportunity to sign up for a baseline COVID-19 test prior to the start the term. We expect all students on campus, and all faculty and staff who will be regularly interacting with students, to participate in ongoing pooled surveillance testing.

Q. I am TA-ing (or serving as an instructor of record) in-person this semester. What pandemic-related issues should I be aware of?

As always, instructors should meet regularly with TAs to discuss course issues and should confirm whom to contact in case of emergency, especially if the faculty member is not available in a given instance. In addition, if you are a TA, you should:

- familiarize yourself with key public health protocols described in the Compact and related policy document;
- expect the instructor of record for your course to make compliance with public health protocols a regular discussion topic;
- not hesitate to reach out to the instructor of record or your DGS/chair/dean if you have any concerns;
- review the recommendations for in-person teaching at the end of these FAQs.

If you are an instructor of record, you should:
- familiarize yourself with key public health protocols described in the Compact and related policy document;
- not hesitate to reach out to your DGS/chair/dean if you have any concerns;
- review the recommendations for in-person teaching at the end of these FAQs.

Q. Will graduate students teaching in-person receive a notification if a student in their course receives a positive COVID-19 test result?

Student Health will provide instructors of record with information to the extent necessary to adequately inform them of potential exposures in or around the classroom, while maintaining confidentiality under applicable laws and university policies. Individuals who are identified through the contact tracing process will be contacted privately. As a result, faculty, instructors, and TAs should refrain from commenting on possible COVID-19 exposures.

Q. As a TA, if I test positive for COVID-19 or learn that I have been exposed to someone who has tested positive, what obligations do I have to notify the instructor of record?

You have the usual obligation to inform the instructor of record if you will need to miss one or more classes, as you would for any reason. You do not need to disclose that your inability to attend class is COVID-19 related.

Q. Will we have plastic shields around the lectern and should I encourage students to use plastic face helmets?

No. Plastic partitions do not reduce risk from COVID-19 in any scientifically demonstrated way. They are not an effective substitute for masks, physical distancing, and other measures recommended by health and safety experts. The CDC also does not currently recommend face shields as substitutes for masks.

Q. If I don’t feel comfortable teaching in-person, can I switch my in-person course to an on-line format?

Yes. You can choose to move a course or section online if conditions lead to a change in how you feel about teaching in-person. It will be important to communicate any change clearly to the instructor of record (in the case of TAs), students, and your chair/dean.

Classroom Situations

Q. I have a student who refuses to wear a face covering. What can I do?

The first step is to ask them to leave the room to protect the safety of others in the course. If the individual refuses to leave, stop the class, tell students that you will schedule a remote/virtual class to cover the material for that day, and then instruct everyone to leave the room. If you are a TA, report the incident to the instructor of record; if you are an instructor of record, report the incident to your DUS and/or DGS, depending on the level of the course, as well as your chair or dean.
Q. What should I do (as an instructor of record or a TA) if a student in an in-person class claims a medical exemption from wearing a mask, or needs to be able to read lips?

Students requesting a medical exemption from wearing a face covering should be directed to the Disability Management System for exploration of possible reasonable accommodations (919-668-1267 or sdao@duke.edu). The Disability Management System and the Student Disability Access Office will work with the student to determine if the request for the exemption is reasonable based upon medical need or health condition as part of the interactive reasonable accommodation process. Clear Masks can be obtained from DMS to assist with students who read lips as a method of communication. Contact Tony Galiani (tony.galiani@duke.edu) for assistance with Clear Mask ordering and distribution.

Q. What can I do when I know someone has been infected with or been exposed to COVID-19 and is not complying with public health requirements (self-isolation or quarantine, for example)?

Anyone who is concerned about non-compliance or behaviors of another member of the community (including students, staff, and faculty) that jeopardize health and safety, and who do not feel comfortable addressing the situation directly, should contact their chair or the office of their dean. They can also contact Duke’s anonymous Speak Up Program at (800) 826-8109 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week), complete the online form (https://values.duke.edu/speak-up-reporting), or contact the Duke Office of Audit, Risk, and Compliance.

Parameters for Overnight Travel

Q. Where can I get up-to-date guidelines on overnight travel, particularly travel during the winter break?

A starting point is the official guidance for Duke-related travel. Bookmark and regularly consult the Duke Travel Policy for information and guidance on travel domestically and internationally. Guidance for personal overnight travel is informed by the Duke-related travel policy, but not as restrictive. You should review the question below on personal travel and read Duke’s Statement on Personal Travel for additional information.

Q. Is travel to an academic conference in another state forbidden during the semester?

At the moment, Duke has prohibited non-essential Duke travel, including travel solely for the purpose of attending a conference. There is a process to request permission to use Duke funds for travel that is critical for scholarly research or other official purposes. You can find more information here.

Q. I’m not sure about the rules pertaining to weekend overnight travel within driving distance. And what about emergencies, such as the need to travel for a funeral or to take care of a relative? Are such trips now prohibited, or discouraged?
Such personal trips are not prohibited. Duke asks that you carefully assess the need for and circumstances surrounding personal overnight travel. If you do undertake such a trip, and if you are obligated to complete daily symptom monitoring, you must report such travel after you return. Depending on the circumstances, personal travel may have implications for your ability to come to campus. Please see the Statement on Personal Travel.

Keep in mind that COVID-19 may lead to state and local governmental travel restrictions, which can change quickly based on pandemic conditions, and which may delay, complicate, or prevent your entry to other countries, your reentry to the United States, and/or your travel between states.

Q. If I am considering personal travel, can I seek approval prior to departure to understand if I will be required to quarantine upon my return?

No. Assessment of the risks posed by any trip is not solely location based. You can and should review local pandemic conditions at any potential destination as you weigh whether or not to undertake personal overnight travel. Upon your return, our health professionals will need to review a full range of environmental and health considerations associated with any trip, including but not limited to the number of people you were exposed to, your proximity to others, the health of others, and adherence to public health protocols.